Harnessing the business power of WhatsApp
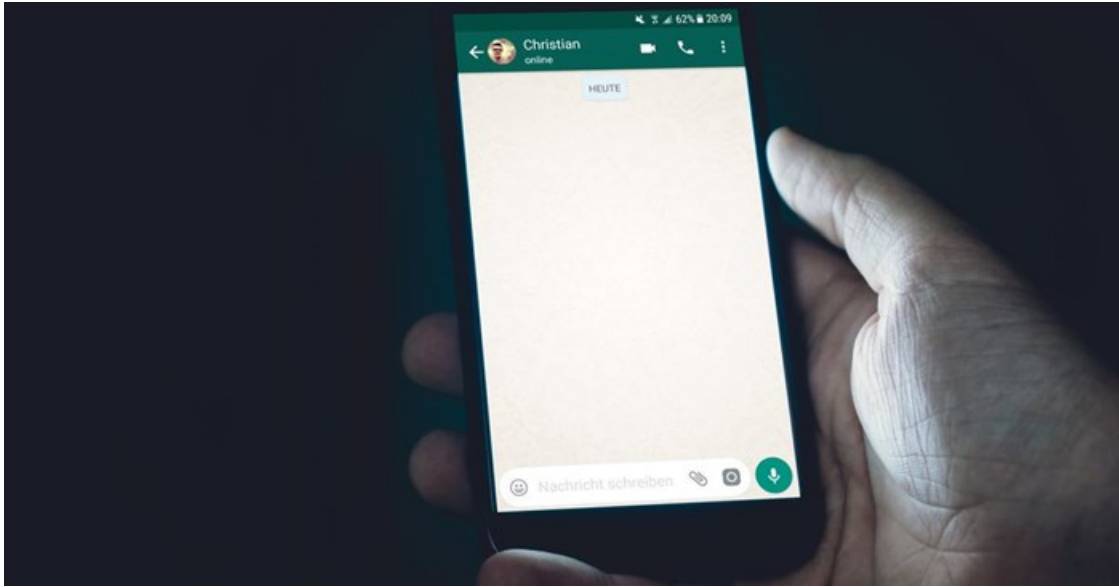
By Shaun van Rooyen   5 Feb 2020

Today, customers demand more than ever before from brands, including fast, personalised, reliable and free two-way communication.

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Organisations that have realised how important it is to reach their customers where they are and on a communication channel that they know and trust, are increasingly looking to WhatsApp Business API (application program interface) as their preferred platform to facilitate this communication, and with good reason.

World's most trusted chat app

WhatsApp currently boasts 1.5 billion active subscribers, across 180 countries, making it the world's most used chat app. Unsurprisingly, it is also the most widely used chat app on the African continent, as well as in South Africa, where nine out of 10 Internet users are active on WhatsApp, according to research findings.

Aside from the ubiquitous nature of the chat app, WhatsApp Business API has the potential to connect businesses with customers in a familiar and privately secure way. By providing services over the channel, organisations can expect to increase the likelihood of customer engagement and consequently loyalty due to convenience, trust and familiarity this chat app provides.

As a result, they can ultimately move their business in a new direction by introducing a 'pull strategy' that is engaging, interactive and fun and move away from a more costly low ROI (return on investment) traditional 'push strategy'.

The customer-centric approach to communication

The channel allows organisations to leverage rich and branded content, such as images, sound, documents and video, as well as conversations initiated by themselves or by their customers. Using WhatsApp Business API, a brand can build a rich multimedia two-way communication channel with its customers at an enterprise scale.

The benefits to mid-sized to large enterprises, is that they can use WhatsApp Business API for a wide range of customer-centric communications and queries that automate processes which include applications, and registrations, status confirmations and updates, location services, transaction alerts, one-time pins, two-factor authentications (2FA's) and payment reminders, among others.
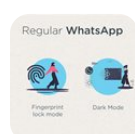
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Essentially, it is the ideal communication channel for companies that have a large customer base and a large volume of business to consumer (B2C) activity, and whose call centres or offices are routinely inundated with repetitious queries. WhatsApp Business API is perfectly positioned to take over this form of communication and provide a self-service channel that is easy to use and can be automated without frustrating the customer.

Increasing automation to deal with critical issues

The benefit of introducing automation via a channel such as WhatsApp Business API into a call centre is that it frees up call centre agents to deal with more intricate and urgent queries.

A recent example of this is a local bus ticketing company that handles a call volume of about 10,000 calls a week, with about 80% of the queries being about whether a bus is leaving for a specific destination on a particular day, what the price of the ticket is and what the time departure is.

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25 Sep 2019

The company's call centre agents had to repeatedly go through the same process, which was time-consuming, labour intensive and in some cases demoralising. Automating this communication via WhatsApp Business API, would take a massive load off the call centre and allow agents to deal with critical issues, such as attending to customers who have bought the wrong ticket, or those trying to trace a refund.

These are typical issues that need human intervention, however, a team of real-time chat agents and the customer can continue to use WhatsApp to chat rather than speaking to an agent telephonically.
Hence, there is no need to fear that chat apps will make humans redundant but could in fact create new positions for those who will need to become real-time chat agents, manage the system and teach the chat agents or chatbot the required language to use.

Security is key

It is also worth reiterating that WhatsApp communications are end-to-end encrypted to extremely strong standards. In fact, the chat app's messages are more secure than many other digital channels and are just as well suited to confidential messages as SMS or email.

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Innovative and forward-thinking companies, that are bold and agile enough to seize the opportunity, are upping the stakes on conversational commerce by enabling the customers to use WhatsApp Business API to communicate and transact with them. Can your organisation afford to be left behind?

ABOUT SHAUN VAN ROOYEN

Shaun van Rooyen is the strategic accounts and partnerships manager for Infobip Africa.
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